Peck showed each stride to be six inches in length when the bird was running fast.

Aphriza virgata. Surf-bird. On December 31, a cold, stormy day when the sleet-laden wind dashed the ocean spray high up on the rocks, we found a small flock of these hardy birds near Cape Meares, feeding about on the more sheltered rocks in company with a flock of Black Turnstones. The place was visited again in March, but no Surf-birds were seen.

Arenaria melanocephala. Black Turnstone. During September this species was seen several times feeding on the sandy ocean beach to the north. During January and March the birds were found only on the rocky beach, where a flock of ten or twelve was seen each time the place was visited.

Haematopus bachmani. Black Oystercatcher. This strange, shy bird was seen every time I made my way among the rocks in the vicinity of Cape Meares. Found usually in two's or three's, but on January 2, I saw a flock of a dozen or more. The Oystercatcher feeds on the marine life found growing on the rocks and to my knowledge never seeks food in any other place. The species was fairly common during May. It is known to breed on Three Arch Rocks.

State Fish and Game Office, Portland, Oregon, February 18, 1914.

A SADLY NEGLECTED MATTER

By ALLAN BROOKS

IN THAT best of all collector's manuals, Ridgway's "Directions for Collecting Birds", published in 1891, there occur the following passages in describing the preliminaries to skinning the specimen:

"No measurements are necessary since all measurements of scientific value are best taken from the dried skin. * * * Then if there are any noteworthy features as to color of soft parts they should be carefully noted, this being a very important matter and one sadly neglected by collectors."

How often have I recognized the truth of the last remark when examining the labels of birds collected by American ornithologists. In my own collection not two per cent other than those taken by myself have any data as to color of soft parts. The worst offenders are the ornithologists of California. Among several hundred skins, collected by a dozen or more men, mostly well known to science, only *one* has any record of this sort,—a California Woodpecker collected in the early eighties and which bears the simple legend "eyes white".

Specimens taken by European collectors usually have very complete data in this respect, and all their works of reference pay especial attention to the subject. As an instance I may cite Oates' "Game Birds of India", a tiny duodecimo volume intended for the use of the sportsman. In its small compass eighty-eight species of upland game birds are treated: Habits, recognition marks, descriptions, nidification, measurements, weights, and, in nearly every species, a full record of colors of soft parts.

The utter indifference of even the best ornithologists of America to this "very important matter" has been brought home to me rather forcibly by a

couple of experiences during the past year. While making illustrations for the forthcoming "Birds of California" I had the privilege of the loan of some valuable material from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley, but was sadly handicapped by the complete absence of all data relative to the vanished color of the bills, feet, and irides. In the case of a Flammulated Screech Owl I might have colored the iris yellow as in other American members of this genus, as there was nothing to guide me on the label of this most valuable specimen, collected by no other than Mr. Grinnell.

The only bird of this species I had seen in the flesh was too far gone in decomposition to afford any data. Neither Ridgway's *Manual* nor Coues' *Key* gave any help, nor did Dr. Merriam's description of the subspecies *idahoensis,* taken by his own party, and the accompanying figure indicated a pale yellowish brown iris.

Fortunately at this juncture there came a memory of a field note in THE CONDOR by that excellent observer, Mr. F. C. Willard, and on turning over a file of back numbers it was found in volume XI, page 201. "The most striking feature to me was the mild look of her face, which appeared very different in aspect from that of other owls I had met with. Presently I discovered that this was due to the eyes, which instead of having a yellow iris as in other owls were a dark chocolate brown."

The other case in point appertained to a friend who was collecting material for a leading Eastern ornithologist. I had previously myself collected for a close friend and fellow worker of this gentleman, who gave me particular instructions to collect all data as to the soft parts, and for whom I had made some hundreds of detailed drawings illustrating these. I advised my friend to be very particular in this regard; judge my surprise when he informed me later that his patron had told him to omit all data relative to the color of soft parts from the labels, but to note the length in flesh, and expanse! Now this ornithologist is a doctor and therefore well aware of the great difference the amount of relaxation that the muscles may be subjected to would make; length in flesh, even if somewhat variable, might be of some value, but of what earthly use is a record of *expanse?* A relic of Pre-Cuvierian days, now relegated to the columns of the local weekly in recording the "tip-to-tip" of the last eagle killed by the country sportsman—with a foot or two thrown in for good measure.

If the color of soft parts was always noted it would simplify the separation of many closely allied species. As an instance, take the case of *Junco phaeonotus palliatus* and *Junco phaeonotus dorsalis,* which are only allowed sub-specific distinction. If the color of the bill and irides was noted on the labels of all these compared, it would probably be a simple matter to distinguish them as they are evidently specifically distinct.

The Red-backed Junco (*dorsalis*) has the pinkish bill and dark claret colored iris of all northern juncos, and it hops like a junco. The Arizona Junco (*palliatus*) has a black upper mandible and a pale yellow lower, with the brilliant yellow iris of a Golden-eye drake. Its motions are just as different from other juncos as its eyes and bill are, as it walks daintily and deliberately over the floor of the forest like a tit-lark or water-thrush, instead of the shuffling hop of the juncos and sparrows.

The writer is well aware that absolutely different colors of irides can obtain in the same species, such as in the tit-mice of the genus *Psaltriparus;* but

such types are extremely rare, and offer in themselves a large field of research in studying the laws of variation and heredity.

Another deterrent factor in the noting of colors is that many collectors distrust their ability in this regard. They assume that a trained eye, a knowledge of the various tints, and the names of all the pigments are necessary. This is not the case; all that is needed is the ability to distinguish the ordinary colors. These can be qualified by the simplest of prefixes,—"dark", "light", "dull", "bright", or "intense",—or modified by a terminal such as "bluish" to indicate something akin to blue. The description should be as concise and brief as possible; too elaborate details are apt to tangle one up. Also it is hardly necessary to define the color of the eyes of all such small birds that have the ordinary brown iris, nor to record the black bill and feet of most of the Corvidae, for example. It is the *divergence* from the ordinary type that is noteworthy.

Some few collectors make elaborate records of the colors of soft parts in their note books, leaving the label of the particular specimen they make the record from, blank in this respect; this is a method greatly to be condemned; one might almost as well record the sex in this manner, as one never knows the ultimate destination of the specimen in future years—or centuries.

Make all records on the label itself; probably the most convenient way is to record the colors of soft parts on the reverse side of the label to that which carries the name, sex, locality, and date. Without these data the specimen is incomplete, a monument during the whole period of its existence to the lack of thoroughness of its collector, no matter how perfect it may otherwise be.

Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, March 4, 1914.

NESTING OF THE KITTLITZ MURRELET

By JOHN E. THAYER

RECENTLY I had the good fortune to obtain from Captain F. E. Kleinschmidt, eggs of the Kittlitz Murrelet (*Brachyramphus brevirostris*), together with some interesting information regarding the breeding habits of the bird. I think, although I am not sure, that these are the first authentic eggs of this species. I have heard only of the white eggs, the same as the one already in my collection, which evidently are not of the Kittlitz Murrelet.

The egg found on the ground, on the side of Pavloff Mountain, June 10, 1913, has a ground color of olive-lake, dotted all over with different sized markings of dark and light brown. It measures, in inches, 2.29x1.40. The other egg, taken from the oviduct of a bird May 29, 1913, is perfectly formed, and was evidently about to be laid. Its ground color is yellow glaucous, with dark brown spots over the whole egg. The measurements are, 2.46x1.45. The second egg taken from a bird's oviduct was so broken that it could not be measured, but color and markings are the same as in the one last described. I have both the females from which these eggs were taken.

Pavloff Bay and Pavloff Volcano, Alaska, where Captain Kleinschmidt's notes and specimens were taken, is near the west end, and on the south side, of the Alaska Peninsula, a little northwest of the Shumagin Islands.

This is what Captain Kleinschmidt says: